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ROHIT, JADEJA HOLD FORT AS ENGLAND TOIL

Hundreds by India captain and all-rounder rescue the team after it was reduced to 33/3 in the first innings of the third Test on Thursday

SENIOR PROS STEP UP

After losing three early wickets for 33 runs, Rohit Sharma scored 131 and Ravindra Jadeja was batting on 110 to take India to 326/5 at stumps

DREAM DEBUT FOR SARFARAZ

After piling runs in Ranji Trophy, an emotional Sarfraz Khan finally got his India cap on Thursday in front of his dad and wife. He made 62 | P15



Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja



Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Modern farming, Prosperous farmers

3.5 fold increase in fertilizer subsidy in last 10 years; Increase from ₹ 71 thousand crore in 2014 to over ₹ 2.5 lakh crore now

BJP had made electoral bonds a medium for bribe and commission. Today a stamp has been put on this

Rahul Gandhi, Congress

SC has delivered a verdict, we respect it. Electoral bonds had laudable objective of bringing transparency

Ravi Shankar Prasad, BJP

It is the most historic judgement that we have got from the SC in 5-7 years. It is a great boon for democracy

S Y Quraishi, former CEC

It is a historic judgment, it's in the interest of a clean democracy. I hope that political parties will learn their lessons

T S Krishnamurthy, ex-CEC

Welcome this unanimous judgment scrapping the electoral bonds that legalise political corruption

Sitaram Yechury, CPM

● ORDERS SBI TO GIVE EC DATA ON BUYERS AND RECIPIENTS ● POLL PANEL TOLD TO UPLOAD INFO ON ITS SITE ● VERDICT WEEKS BEFORE LS POLLS

SC NIXES ELECTORAL BONDS

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

In a landmark judgment, a five-member Constitution bench the Supreme Court on Thursday unanimously struck down the electoral bond scheme notified by the BJP government at the Centre in early 2018, as unconstitutional. The verdict is a moral blow for the government ahead of the general elections.

The bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud gave the State Bank of India, the issuing bank, time till March 6 to share with the Election Commission of India full data on the purchasers of the electoral bonds and their recipients. It went on to instruct the poll body to upload the SBI's information on its official website within a week of receipt of the data — by March 13.

The court also declared the amendments to the Income Tax Act and Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act to facilitate the electoral bonds, null and void. The CJI further said the amendment to the Companies Act that opened the door for blanket corporate political funding was unconstitutional.

"The Union has been unable to establish the measure adopted in clause 7(4)(1) of the electoral scheme is the least restrictive measure (on fundamental rights)," the verdict authored by the CJI for himself as also for justices B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said. Justice Sanjay Khanna wrote a separate verdict. He



Videograb of the five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and comprising justices Sanjay Khanna, B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra | P11

had a different reasoning but arrived at the same conclusion.

"The scheme is not fool-proof. There are sufficient gaps in the scheme which enable political parties to know the particulars of the contributions made to them," Justice Chandrachud said. Information about funding of political parties, he added, is essential for the effective exercise of the choice of voting.

Data shows that 94% of the donations were in the denomination of ₹1 crore. In other words, electoral bonds provide economically powerful contributors access to lawmakers and the ability to influence policy decisions while giving them selective anonymity vis-a-vis the public. The

court said information about political funding would enable voters to assess if there is any correlation between policy making and financial contributions.

In an affidavit filed in the SC on March 27, 2019, the EC had informed that it had written to the Centre questioning the changes in several laws relating to political funding, saying it will have serious repercussions on transparency. It had also warned the government that changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 could allow unchecked foreign funding of political parties. "In a situation where electoral bonds were not reported, it cannot be ascertained whether the political party has taken any donation from government companies and foreign sources."

Justice Sanjay Khanna, in his separate verdict, said retribution, victimisation or retaliation against any donor to a political party is an abuse of law and power. It needs to be corrected but cannot be seen as justification to make the scheme anonymous. "Transparency and not secrecy is the cure and antidote," he said.

It is a historic and bold step in restoring transparency in democracy and reforming the electoral system. Electoral bonds, implemented by the BJP government at the Centre ahead of the 2019 LS polls, were another form of bribery

Siddaramaiah, Karnataka Chief Minister

Kannada boards: Violators to lose trade licences

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state government will soon constitute an enforcement wing under the Kannada and Culture Department to ensure 60% Kannada on the name boards of all business and industrial establishments.

The wing will have powers to impose penalties on violators and cancel their trade licences.

The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday. "We are formulating rules and regulations to ensure 60% Kannada on name boards," Kannada and Culture Minister Shivraj Thangadagi said.

The government will also develop a Kannada vigilance app to file complaints related to violation of rules pertaining to the use of Kannada language. Such complaints will be sent to the committees formed to initiate action.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Balancing between welfare schemes & development push



K'TAKA BUDGET 2024-25

DKS: New direction to state's progress

Hubballi: Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said the budget will give a new direction to the progress of the state. It will witness the same determination that the government showed in the implementation of its five guarantees | P4

RAMU PATIL @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah is set to present his record 15th budget on Friday. Although the five guarantee schemes greatly restrict his manoeuvrability, the CM is likely to make all efforts to strike a fine balance between continuing social welfare schemes and giving a push to development.

The Congress government's flagship programmes implemented in a phased manner after the party returned to power in May last year require a huge chunk of budget allocation.

The budget to be presented just around two months before the Lok Sabha elections is likely to reflect the poll necessities. The CM would take the aspirations of all communities and regions into consideration while presenting his government's plan of action for the next financial year.

In the second budget of his second tenure as the CM, Siddaramaiah faces a big challenge of countering the perception that development has taken a backseat due to a lack of funds and the government is only focusing on the guarantee schemes. His government is accused of not taking up any big project in the last eight months.

Woman argues herself, wins case against BBMP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 57-year-old Bengaluru-based woman Kavita Podwal has won an eight-year-long legal battle against the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) by arguing on her own after the civic body illegally demolished her house in Doddanekundi in

2016 without following proper procedures.

The Karnataka High Court directed the Executive Engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) to assess the financial damage caused on account of the demolition and submit a report to the Chief Commissioner of BBMP who should pay the same to the woman.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj said the demolition of the house was illegal while allowing the petition filed by Podwal. The judge noted that the house was demolished without giving a notice under Section 462 of Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, and without providing an opportunity to the petitioner to avail legal options.



40 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TODAY)

Burning midnight oil to resolve agri unrest

HARPREET BAIWA @ Chandigarh

THE third round of talks between the Centre and farmer leaders were held in Chandigarh on Thursday night, even as the stand-off between protesters and security personnel continued for the third day on the Punjab-Haryana border. The meeting between three Union ministers—Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal, and Nitayanand Rai—and farmer leaders started three hours later than scheduled.

Sources said the Union ministers were closeted with Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann at a five-star hotel ahead of their meet with the delegation of 14 farmer leaders including Jagjit Singh Dallewal, Sarwan Singh Pandher, and Jarnail Singh.

The meeting between the Central ministers and farmer union leaders was ongoing at press time. Two previous rounds of talks on February 8 and 12 were not successful.

Sources said the Centre has a new proposal, which, if accepted, could offer a resolution to the agitation.

CM Mann and Punjab finance minister Harpal Singh Cheema also joined the negotiation talks at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration.

The situation at Shambhu and Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana borders remained calm compared with the past two days. Train services were disrupted at many places in Punjab following the 'rail roko' call by some unions.

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In hosp only for routine check up: Gowda
Bengaluru: Former PM and JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda was admitted to the Manipal Hospital here on Thursday morning following complaints of respiratory illness, fever and cough. The hospital said he is stable. "I wish to clarify that I am in the hospital for only routine checks. I will be back home soon. There is no cause for any worry," Gowda stated on X.

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